



DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS

1316 Peger Road • Fairbanks, Alaska • 99709 • 907-374-9500 • Fax: 907-374-9580

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

17 January 2022

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

In December 1531, Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to an Aztec Indian, Juan Diego on Mount Tepeyac which is on the outskirts of modern-day Mexico City. Mary appeared there for one reason, “it was the will of God.” It was God’s will that He would use this most powerful image imprinted on the tilma of Juan Diego where the original is currently displayed in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

As many scientists of various disciplines, theologians and scripture scholars have studied this image for centuries, there is a common interpretation that it was immediately understood by the Aztec people of that time. In 1474 there was a great temple dedicated in Mexico City to the earth goddess, and in a four-day period an estimated 80,000 people were sacrificed. This practice of human sacrifice continued to the time of the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Mary appears as an indigenous woman before the sun with the moon under her feet, her head bowed and pregnant with the Son of God. She is clothed in the colors of nobility. Following the apparition, thousands converted every day which led to an estimated 14 million converting to the Catholic faith.

I urge you to study this image of Our Lady, place it in your homes and parishes as a reminder of God’s will for promoting the beauty, goodness and truth of human life as it flows from the hand of our Creator. Mary’s “yes” to the Archangel Gabriel is a “yes” to the redemption and announcement from God that it is His will to declare that all life is sacred from conception to natural death.

As the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and commissioned him as a “protector of the holy family,” the Incarnation, we share in this same calling. I urge you to pray, in your actions like St. Joseph, in your voice like the prophets to declare all life is sacred.

January 21, 2022, marks the 49th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade, and it seems there is momentum for the Supreme Court to overturn this decision. Pray like you have never before! As the US Bishop’s Conference Pro-Life Secretariat has encouraged us to participate in a national vigil, I ask all our parishes to pray and discuss what they can do. We have COVID spreading through some communities, so gatherings are not encouraged but prayers at home, offered on the VHF radio, online or in Churches are highly encouraged.

God created each person for greatness, and may we honor that this greatness by God’s design and choice begins in the womb where his Son started his earthly journey. Every person is created in the image and likeness of God, their life matters and God has a mission and purpose for them.

Thanks for your prayers, fasting and support!

†Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski
Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska
Diocese of Fairbanks



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